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## What's at stake in germ research

Our Tom Diaz reports that some well-informed experts on the Soviet Union believe our friends over there are running chemical warfare experiments on unwilling human patients tied to stakes. Some intelligence sources doubt the need for testing, given the advanced state of their chemical warfare program. Others say they have seen the aerial photos showing victims collapsed at the stakes. A third possibility, favored by Angelo Codevilla, a former Senate Intelligence Committee staffer, is that such experiments were carried out in the early '70s.

Interestingly, no one denies the reports of human experimentation. The closest thing to a denial was a CIA spokesman's assertion that this was "a very sensitive subject, and we just haven't released any information on it at all." Hardly soothing.

Last year William Kucewicz of *The Wall*

*Street Journal* wrote a deeply researched series on Soviet developments in chemical warfare. Through interviews with visiting Soviet scientists, he demonstrated that such experiments were a major priority of Soviet defense R&D, that the action against the rebels in Afghanistan furnished a proving ground for existing tactical toxins, and that current research focused on isolating the active ingredient in cobra venom and adapting it for battlefield use.

Research of this kind is naturally hateful to Americans. At the same time, the question of how to deter the use of these weapons must be faced. At a minimum, our knowledge of Soviet experiments should be made public, the president should call attention to it, and the indicated defensive research — into immunizations, protective gear, etc. — should be undertaken without delay.